بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Al-Farouq

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And remind (others), for the reminder most certainly benefits the Believers
Surah Zhaariyaat, verse 55

A Shar'ee ruling on Interfaith gatherings

QUESTION:

The jamiatul Ulama south Africa had engaged in an interfaith mashurah regarding covid and how to move forward, and now an interfaith prayer. Much of the community don't know what to think about it as they are engaging in such so openly and are ulama. Please provide clarification of this matter from an Islamic perspective.

ANSWER:

Sadly, the Jamiatul-Ulema and those Islamic scholars/leaders who participated in this interfaith prayer meeting, albeit virtually, had seriously erred in their decision. An interfaith prayer meeting is totally haraam. It is haraam for Muslims in general, let alone Ulema of Deen, to be party to such meetings. In fact, the participation by Ulema is even worse, for it becomes a basis for the layman to embrace such an event and regard it as permissible. Ulema have to be wary how they tread. Ulema of Deen have a duty to uphold Islam. Ulema are not politicians and should never integrate political agendas with Deen. The lines between Deen and kuffar politics should never be blurred.

In today's world, Muslims live within a totally un-Islamic environment wherein many of our Deeni principles threatened to be compromised or totally discarded. It is our test and challenge to hold onto these Deeni principles regardless of our surrounds and environs. While we Muslims should never be **indifferent** to the plight of our fellow citizens, we are bound to remain **different** to other communities and nations in terms of our faith and practice. We will live among them, but our behaviour, conduct, and approach to matters affecting our lives must be in conformity to Shariah and consistent with the Law of Allah. In this lies our success and recognition by other faiths. It is the duty of the Ulema to preach, practice, and uphold this Shar'ee consistency and compliance. When Ulema fail in this regard, the Muslim masses will lose their Deeni compass. Almighty Allah states in the Holy Quran: **O Believers! Take control of your own selves (in Deeni matters), then those whose who have gone astray shall not harm you, for you have then attained guidance."** (Surah Maaidah, verse 105) This verse effectively emboldens the Muslims to dissociate from other cultures, creeds, and codes of conduct, and stresses the need to adhere to Shariah. 'Taking control of yourselves' is a command to develop iemaan and taqwa within ourselves, thus insulating our souls and hearts from outside effluence.

The following are reasons for the prohibition of an interfaith prayer meeting:

1) When a Muslim supplicates to Allah for the removal of hardship and affliction, the acceptance of his dua depends on The Mercy of Allah. Divine Mercy shall not descend in the company of kuffar and disbelievers.

2) For the above reason, when Muslims go out for salaatul-istisqaa or to make dua for rain, the law is that they should not be accompanied by kuffar of any faith. The Fuqaha state that the supplication for rain requires Divine Mercy, and that shall not descend when the enemies of Allah are in the gathering.

3) In such a gathering leaders of other faiths will be praying and supplicating in the name of the gods that they worship. A Muslim's participation in the gathering is tacit condoning of such prayers. For example, Christians say "in the name of Lord Jesus", which is an expression of their kufr belief that Nabi Eesa (alayhis-salaam) is God or the son of God. How can a Muslim witness such kufr when there exist no extenuating circumstances to be in such a gathering?

4) A hadeeth of Rasoolullah ﷺ states: **"Whoever bolsters the ranks of a people is (considered) among them".** (*Kanzul-Ummal*) By taking part in an interfaith event, the Muslim bodies that are present add to the number of participants. After such a meeting, reports will boast of how many faith groups had attended. The numbers will include the Muslim bodies who were present. This hadeeth very harshly refers to such Muslims as among the kuffar faith groups. (Allah forbid)

5) The general prohibition of Shariah in attending any haraam function such as a musical concert, a dance, a mixed gathering of males and females: The interfaith event is a gathering where kufr is being expressed. The same prohibition will apply here as well.

6) Shariah prohibits imitation or emulation of the kuffar. On many occasions the Messenger of Allah ﷺ emphasized opposing the Yahood and Nasaara in their acts of worship. For example, we are told to fast two days in Muharram in opposition to the Jews who fasted only on the tenth; not to offer salaah while reading from a copy of the Quran as this is how the Nasaara pray in their pulpits; not to offer salaah at sunrise and sunset because that is when the kuffar prostrate to the sun; to lengthen the beard and shorten the moustache in opposition to the kuffar, having sahoor before fasting and making a prompt iftar, in contrast to the Jews who don't have sahoor and delay their iftar. There are many more practices of this nature. All of these were enjoined to accentuate the contrasting conduct and practice between Muslims and followers of other faiths. This interfaith idea is the brainchild of kuffar. Muslims who join in this are emulating an act of worship of the kuffar; hence, there should be absolutely no doubt in its impermissibility. Another famous hadeeth in Abu Dawood states**:** **"Whoever imitates a nation is (like) one of them."**

7) Should interfaith gatherings become acceptable or tolerable over the passing of time, there is the great likelihood of other kuffar religious rites become acceptable to Muslims. Already we have had an horrific example of a senior member of the Muslim Judicial Council in Cape Town, who attended a Hindu function where acts of shirk occurred. In spite of the apologies and other forms of verbal atonement that followed, the damaged had been done. I dare say this has set the tone for acceptance and adaptation of other acts of kufr. This interfaith business is just another spike in that ghastly cycle that bodes only evil and darkness for the Ummat. May Allah Ta'ala protect us.

I believe that participation in such events is mainly to appease other parties and to make it seem that Muslims are part of the so-called mainstream society. But there is neither gain nor any compelling reason to do so. Recent events have proven that appeasing political parties or religious groups bring no joy to our woes. There is no validity in sacrificing our Deeni principles for a gain that is simply imaginary and fictitious. Our honour comes from adhering to the orthodox Shariah. That makes us a dynamic Ummat and commands respect from our contemporaries.

We have our own methods of engaging in dua that involves only the Muslim ummah. We should adopt these methods and then see how soon Allah's Mercy arrives. There is just no reason or cause to join hands with the kuffar in what is strictly an act of worship.

- The question also made reference to a "mashura" that was held with other faiths regarding how to cope with the covid-19 pandemic. I am of the view that even if such mashuras were strictly to do with administrative matters and not religious, there is still no need to engage other groupings since we Muslims have our own strategies and mechanisms; unless we are certain that our Deeni principles are not threatened in such consultative meetings.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us true understanding of Deen and guide us to His Pleasure – aameen

Allah Ta'ala knows best

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